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POINTS OF VIEW



Two trains going in opposite directions through the new Beaulieu Park Station - a freight train heading towards London and a passenger train heading towards Colchester

CLLR MARIE GOLDMAN

Where there's a will there's a way on climate change as tools already exist

SOMETIMES, I start my day (and occasionally this column!) not knowing quite how it's all going to pan out. That's fine - I mean, I like a bit of variety and I certainly don't like every day to be the same. It keeps life interesting. But sometimes connections are made throughout the day, which make it feel as though it was meant to be that way.

A common thread seems to connect the hours even if the meetings or events I attend don't, on the face of it, have much in common.

I recently had a day just like that when I attended two very different but, as it turns out, inter-connected events.

The first was a meeting that I attended in my capacity as deputy leader of Chelmsford City Council. This was the rather lengthily-titled 'Beaulieu Park Station Member Engagement Group', which is a group of partner organisations getting together about once a quarter to discuss progress at the new Beaulieu Park Station and find out what the issues are and whether there is anything we can all do to help the project along its way.

As you might expect, this is an extremely complex project, being one of just a small handful of new stations being built in the country, especially on a main line. The contractor, Murphy, is making great progress, and it's now at the very visible

stage where the station building is starting to take shape, platforms are in place and it has even taken delivery of one of the huge sets of stairs that will go up and over the platforms, allowing you to get from one side to the other.

Around the table, discussing the project were other key partners. Besides Chelmsford City Council, there was Essex County Council, Network Rail, Greater Anglia, Vistry (aka Countryside), as well as representatives from Chelmsford Garden Community and Boreham parish councils.

There are so many moving parts (and not just on the trains) in a project of this size that it's critical that milestones are hit and risks are identified and mitigated at an early stage. And when something goes wrong (something always does and always will on this scale of project), the important thing is how you get over it - how you work together, adapt and solve the problem to put it all back on course.

The really good news is that despite a few bumps along the way, the station is still on track (I'm so sorry, I'm really struggling to write this without using puns) to be com-

plete and open by the end of 2025.

The end of 2025 may seem a long way off, but I'm positive that it will be worth the wait.

You see, this critical piece of infrastructure isn't just about moving people around, or bringing more jobs into the area, it's also about doing things sustainably.

Electrified public transport is one of the greenest ways to travel any distance over a few miles. Trains are brilliant at transporting large numbers of people, but the sad truth is that so much of our rail network still dates from Victorian times.

Even lots of signal systems are about 75 years old and they simply don't work very well any more, creating delays on the line when they break down and making it far less attractive for anyone to choose.

But the truth is that not only do we WANT people to choose sustainable methods of transport, we NEED them to choose it. We need people to do things differently, and we need governments to do that too.

Which leads me on to the other event that I attended that day. This was the screening of a film about climate change put on at Anglia Ruskin

University by a volunteer for Save the Children UK.

It was fascinating and unlike so many other documentaries that we may see about climate change, it's focus wasn't on how bad things are, but how possible it is to change things for the better using technology that already exists.

The 2019 film is told from the point of view of a father, envisaging a world for his young daughter that in 2040 will have chosen a path that has led to huge progress in reversing the devastating consequences of climate change. He travels the world (acknowledging that comes with its own issues) looking at innovative, inspiring ways of changing how things are done.

He looks at farming methods that are moving away from pesticides and chemicals to planting diverse crops as a way to re-enrich the soil, sucking carbon out of the air in the process and recreating the natural circle of life that used to exist before humans decided to mess with things.

We see micro-energy generation networks being brought together in rural villages in remote parts of India - a way of creating a distributed energy infrastructure that is both more resilient to catastrophic climate events like flooding and also financially beneficial to local communities.

We see forests of seaweed re-

introduced to the sea, creating a rich habitat to regenerate and support underwater eco-systems, while also capturing carbon from the atmosphere and providing a source of food and nutrients for animals and humans alike.

The best part of all of this is that these are technologies that could be implemented and invested in right now. Indeed, in some places, as the film demonstrates, they already are. I think our own country needs to do more of this. We can all make choices to travel more sustainably, to eat a bit less meat, to use less energy, but we also need a government that truly pushes these innovations forward.

At the end of the day, we need everyone to get on board the need for more action on climate change and the climate emergency. I don't believe it's too late to make those changes. Yes, some of the changes will be complex, but if we can build new train stations and train tracks with intricate signalling requirements and a million different components all relying on each other, we can do these other things too. The real issue is that we just have to want to.

If you're interested in watching an optimist's view of the positive changes we can make, you can find out more here: theregenerators.org/2040.

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